

1. A system for providing application services in a computing environment having both user-mode processes and privileged-mode processes, the system comprising:

a user-mode component having an interface configured to access the agent's exposed interface; and

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the configuration component includes a digital signature.

3. The system of claim 1 further comprising a user interface implemented within the user-mode component.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the user-mode component comprises an application software installation wizard.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the agent comprises methods for creating an instance of an installation program in accordance with a definition supplied in the configuration component.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the agent behavior is configured by the contents of the configuration component.

7. The system of claim 2 further comprising methods within the agent for authenticating the digital signature.

8. The system of claim 1 further comprising:
specifications within the configuration component specifying a list of objects that are permitted to be created by the agent; and

5 methods within the agent that are responsive to the list of objects to prevent creation of any object unless it is specified on the list of objects.

9. The system of claim 1 further comprising:
specifications within the configuration component specifying instructions for installing program components into an operating system.

10. A method for managing privileges in a computing environment having both user-mode processes and privileged-mode processes, the method comprising:

executing an agent in privileged mode;
5 exposing an interface of the agent to user-mode processes;

accessing the agent's exposed interface using a user-mode component;

10 specifying a list of authorized code components in a configuration file;

authenticating that the configuration file comes from a trusted source; and

15 executing privileged-mode processes specified by the configuration file using the agent, wherein the agent will only execute privileged-mode processes in response to access by the user-mode code component when the configuration file is authenticated as coming from a trusted source.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising specifying a digital signature within the configuration file.

12 The method of claim 10 further comprising implementing a user interface implemented within the user-mode component.

13. The method of claim 10 further comprising creating an instance of a software application program in accordance with a definition supplied in the configuration file.

14. The method of claim 10 further comprising extending the agent's program behavior according to the contents of the configuration file.

15. The system of claim 11 further comprising authenticating the digital signature using the agent.

16. The system of claim 10 further comprising:
specifying a list of objects within the configuration file that are permitted to be created by the agent; and

5 in response to the list of objects, preventing creation of any object unless it is specified on the list of objects.

17. The system of claim 10 further comprising:
specifying instructions within the configuration file for installing program components into the operating system.

18. An application installation agent executing in a privileged mode in a computing environment having both

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5      an interface for receiving a message specifying a
      configuration file;
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    a set of methods for authenticating the source of
10  the configuration file; and

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19. The agent of claim 18 further comprising a set of methods for determining whether specific privileged-mode processes are permitted by the configuration file.